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Relating to the Petition of John Joseph Farrell For Dispensation

My Personal Details

Name: ..... John Joseph FARRELL

Address: ..... REDACTED RMIDALE, New South Wales

Phone: ..... REDACTED

Seminary: .....Springwood: 1974, 1975, 1976

.....Manly: 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980

Ordinations: .....Ordained Deacon: 28 November 1980

.....Ordained Priest: 21 September 1981

Clerical Appointments

November 1981 to April 1984	Assistant Priest at Moree (Armidale diocese).
July 1984 to August 1987	Assistant Priest at Tamworth (Armidale diocese).
November 1989 to November 1990	Assistant Priest at Kenthurst (Parramatta diocese).
November 1990 to July 1992	Assistant Priest at Merrylands (Parramatta diocese).

Sources

This statement is an overview of my life from my birth to the present. Many of the details I have included in this statement are based on my personal diaries. During my final years at secondary school and throughout my seven years in the seminary I recorded in my personal diaries many details about my activities and my attitudes. Recently, in preparation for a psychological assessment, I read the diaries. This statement is based on evidence from my diaries rather than on mere recollections of events many years later.

1 My early life before I went to the seminary

My name is John Joseph Farrell. I was born on REDA 1953, at Armidale, NSW, Australia. My parents were REDACTED Farrell and his wife REDACTED Farrell nee REDACT. At the time of my birth, my parents were living in Armidale.

I am the youngest of seven children. I have three brothers and three sisters. The names (including their married names), dates and places of birth of my siblings and me are:

REDACTED Farrell	REDACTED 1940, at Maitland)
REDACTED Farrell	REDAC 1942, at Lorn, near Maitland)
REDACTED	REDAC 1944, at Lorn, near Maitland)
REDACTED Farrell	REDACTED 1946, at Lorn, near Maitland)
REDACTED	REDACTED 1948, at Armidale)
REDACTED	REDACTED 1952, at Armidale)
REDACTED Farrell	, at Armidale)

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From my perspective, the order is brother, brother, sister, brother, sister, sister and me.

My parents

My parents were very strong Catholics from solid Catholic backgrounds.

My father, REDACTED Farrell, was a school teacher. He originated from Abermain, a coal mining town, near Cessnock in the Maitland diocese in New South Wales. His mother died when he was about ten years old. This had a significant impact on my father, and this later impacted on me badly. After convent schooling, he won a scholarship to West Maitland Marist Brothers School where he completed his secondary schooling. He won a scholarship to Armidale Teacher's College and was in Armidale during 1936 and 1937. During this time he met and courted my mother.

My mother, REDACTED Maguire, was born and raised in Armidale. She was an only child. This had a significant impact on my mother, and this later impacted on me badly. She had a State school education until she turned 14, when she left school and worked with her father on their farm. She never worked anywhere else. She did not want to marry a farmer and was very pleased when she met RED Farrell, whose future wages as a teacher would be regular. My parents were engaged when they turned 21 years old and were married when they were both 22.

They were married in Armidale in December 1939. Dad, who had started teaching in 1938, secured a new teaching position at a small bush school on the New South Wales coast, near Maitland. My parents were there from 1940 to the end of 1947. It was here that they set up their home and had the first four of their seven children. This was a very happy time for the family. My maternal grandfather came to live with my parents after my grandmother who was living in Armidale died in December 1944.

So, I never had a grandmother because my parents had both lost their mothers before I was born. This later impacted on me badly.

My parents and the four children and grandfather returned to Armidale in 1948. Three more children were born, including me. I was the youngest of the seven children. I was the only one of my siblings to be born in an odd year. The rest were all born in even years. Sadly, I would be ODD in many ways.

My father taught at a local State primary school in Armidale from 1948 until 1951 when he upset an Inspector of Schools and was transferred to the local High School, where he taught the 'slower' students. My father did not enjoy teaching these students.

My Childhood

There are almost no photos of me as a baby. By the time I was born, my parents had moved beyond the novelty about new babies. This later impacted on me badly. I was baptised by Father Richard Shanahan, who was always very kind to me for the rest of his life.

We were living at our family property, known as REDACTED when I was born on REDAC 1953. In 1955, on the day my sister Brenda was confirmed, my grandfather and my father had a huge dispute over some petty matter about the farm, so Mum and Dad packed up and we moved into town. The story is relevant because it illustrates that Mum and Dad did not know how to resolve

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conflicts. My sibblings and I were influenced by this. We moved to the house at REDACTED REDACTED

My sibblings attended the local Catholic schools. My sister RED went to Miss Cooper's preschool (which was just across the road, at the corner of REDACTED streets).

I started preschool when I was about three years old. This is how it happened. One day when I was about three years old I went off with my sister RED to Miss Cooper's preschool, and spent the morning there. Mum did not notice I was missing. When I came home I gave a glowing report about my day at preschool, so my mother rang Miss Cooper and asked if I could go there each day. I was there until the middle of 1958. I have happy memories of that part of my childhood.

One day when I was about five our family was out driving in the car, a door came open and I fell out and broke my collar bone. This seems to have had no negative impact on me.

I also had time in hospital for an operation to have a carbuncle removed. When my father came to the hospital to collect me, he did not give me a hug or make me feel very cherished. This had a very negative impact on me. According to psychologists with whom I have discussed the incident, it is from this time onwards that I developed feelings of emotional insecurity.

I did not start school in the January of 1958, the year when I turned five. The cut off date for starting school in January was strict. Only children born before 30 June could start in January. Having been born in July, I was one of the children who started in the second half of the year. I left Miss Cooper's preschool half way through 1958 and started at St Mary's Girls' School, the local parish school. I began in the transition class. I remember hearing the Cathedral bell tolling for the death of Pope Pius XII. I went into kindergarten the following year (1959). I was among the oldest children in my class, but I never felt as confidant or competent as many people who were younger than I was. Many of them had better social skills. Many had better sporting skills. I was never a confident person and that impacted on me badly throughout my life.

Growing Up Catholic

Ours was a very Catholic home. During my childhood years Mum and Dad and most of their children attended daily Mass, as did many other parents and children. We prayed the family Rosary each night. Mum led the recitation. I am conscious now that in those days, although we had formal prayer we never had petitions for special issues. Psychologists later told me that our family did not know how to identify and own problems and thereby make them 'real' and thus allow us to work through them. The only problems we prayed for were those which were already 'real', such as sick relatives, people who were dying, or for the conversion of Russia. We regularly prayed for missionaries and the dead. We prayed for vocations, but we never prayed specifically that a member of OUR family would have a vocation.

Sodalities were very important in those days for encouraging Catholics to make their monthly confession and to go to Holy Communion. In those days the Communion fast was reduced from abstaining from midnight to abstaining from food for three hours and a cup of tea for one hour. These things were enforced and freely embraced by our family. My father, in particular, was very comfortable about Church rules and truly believed that if he obeyed them he would duly be rewarded with eternal life in Heaven. We accepted that this world was a Valley of Tears and our true home was Heaven.

My parents regularly attended the Saturday night Novena and Confession and were active members of the sodalities they belonged to. Mum was in the Sacred Heart Sodality. My Grandfather, Dad and my brothers were in the Holy Name Society. My sisters and I became members of in the Holy Angels. As my sisters grew older they became members of the Children of Mary.

When I was in 1st Class I made my First Communion, on 7 October 1960. Dean Fisher celebrated the Mass. It was not as happy a day as it should have been and this impacted on me negatively. Because it was a Friday there were no meat dishes at the Communion breakfast. There was no group photo. We have a photo of my mother and me at the breakfast at the Cathedral Hall, but my father was not there, because he had to go to work. Not having my father make a fuss about my special day impacted on me badly.

I remember that at this time I had thoughts about my wedding day. Within a year this changed and I had a vocation to the priesthood. During 1960 a new school was built to cater for the increasing number of Baby-boomer children at the school. The new building was used for the first time from January 1961 when I was in Second Class. I vividly recall the day the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop De Furgustenburg, visited my class that year. He asked what boys in the class would become priests. For reasons I do not understand I did not put up my hand, but later I felt very bad that I had not put my hand up. Worse, I felt I could not discuss this with my parents. This was the first time I was aware that I did not have a close relationship with them. Things only went from bad to worse. There never was a time when I felt close to them and all this had a very negative impact on me for much of my life.

During 1961 my mother's uncle, REDACTED, a bachelor, died. He lived with his siter and brother-in-law, just around the corner from the school. I was instructed to go from school to the home of my mother's aunty and uncle, which I did. While I was there, the Cathedral Administrator, Dean Fisher, was in attendance in the home. I date my vocation to the priesthood from this experience.

I was in the new building at St Mary's for one year in 1961. It was my last year of coeducational schooling. The following year (1962) I started at the single-sex parish Boys' School. I went into 3rd Class, with the De La Salle Brothers teaching me. During these years I started as an altar boy and continued in this useful work until 1970.

There was a parish mission in Armidale about 1962 and it has always been one of my strongest childhood memories. It was the first time I heard the hymn 'Faith of Our Fathers'. The Good Friday ceremony in the cathedral that year had the biggest crowd I have ever seen in the cathedral. I recall being stirred to great fervour. I was also conscious of some very private sins in my life and about not knowing how to deal with them. This was the beginning of how I compartmentalised issues in my life.

Boys in 4th Class were prepared for confirmation. We were confirmed by Bishop Doody on Pentecost Sunday, 2 June 1963. I have almost no memories of the ceremony except that Bishop Doody smiled at me warmly because he knew me and that recognition made me feel cherished. Brother Kieran, who taught me in 4th Class, was excited about Vatican Council renewals and encouraged us to read the Bible. This was a good experience.

My grandfather died in February 1964, the year I turned 11. We became involved in running the farm. My brother REDACT, who had finished school at the end of 1963, became a farmer. Dad

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and I often went out to work on the farm with REDACT. Years later I realised that they did not have communication skills. While driving out to the farm and back with Dad, we did not discuss things. I was conscious that Dad enjoyed doing things on the farm. It gave him relief from stresses from his teaching work and he returned home each night, very calm and peaceful.

For many years, Dad was a very keen cricketer and turned out each Saturday to play with his team. Some of his teammates were his best friends. He was an active member of the Cricket Association and served as its president for seven years. He led by example and spent a lot of time working with other men to prepare wickets and do other things to make the game a success. I was very proud of my father's community service and I was inspired by it. I am conscious that Dad was very practical, rather than being an idealist. He had a fettish about rules and behaviour and I regularly heard him complaining that some people had broken the rules. For him everything was very serious and people had to obey rules and do their duty.

Unlike my other brothers, I did not excel at sports, even though I played cricket and football. I could barely swim at all. I was a scrawney boy and was still playing in the 4 stone football team in 1965 when other boys in my class were playing in the 6 stone team. All this impacted on me very negatively. I am conscious that I did not do as well academically as I could have, because no one at home helped me to recall the day's lessons. This also impacted on me negatively.

Despite my lack of sporting talent and lack of academic success, I was a very happy boy. Our house was very crowded, with ten of us living there until my brothers and sisters began to leave, but it was a happy home. I think I had learned how to make the most of my lot in life. I have no memories of being unduly unhappy. I particularly enjoyed my time at St Mary's Boys' School. I was given a lot of responsibility at the school, especially in 1965 when I was in 6th class, and derived a lot of satisfaction from that. Psychologists have told me that having a roof over my head and food in my belly and having a good schooling was important but was not enough. I also needed appropriate emotional security but did not get it.

Religion played a very important role for my family and for me. Our family was very active in the parish. My mother had been an active member of the school's Parents and Friends Association and was the President for a few years. Mum and many of her friends were regularly in 'the Catholic kitchen', helping with catering for parish functions. I was always very proud of her generosity. It was only later in life I discovered that she helped in the kitchen because she was very comfortable in that role. She felt inferior to some of the other women who were better educated, so she stayed clear of other roles. Her lack of interest in intellectual issues became a barrier for me when I wanted to talk about issues.

The Vatican Council impacted on the local parish, including my family. In 1962 my mother was asked to become a Catechist and she did all the courses. This gave her new knowledge about the faith and she became very enthusiastic about teaching the faith. Dad was very supportive of all these things, but he had a reserved nature and was not able to participate in discussion groups etc. He was always willing to be a worker. My recollection of those days was that we did not have stimulating discussions. Ours was not a family with good communication skills. Dad's approach to most issues was that there were rules to be obeyed and duties to perform. I was influenced by this and held similar views for many years.

Mum and Dad gave a very good example of Catholic living, according to the norms at that time. Sometimes, like many of their friends in the parish, Mum and Dad, did not understand human failings and sin, so they lacked proper compassion for people who did not keep the rules. Mum

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and Dad were devout members of their sodalities. They attended daily Mass at the cathedral and went to Confession regularly. They prayed at home, but it was always formal prayer. There was never any faith sharing. They were very practical Catholics, who were very generous and kind. The yard stick by which our family assessed anyone else was simply: do they go to Mass? There was never any attempt to understand that God called, people were invited to respond, and part of that response was that they would gather with other believers to celebrate the Eucharist, to hear the Word of God and receive the Eucharist, the Food to sustain us on our journey to Eternal Life. Years later I discovered the importance of evangelisation and a basic conversion. Everything else in the spiritual life was built on that. Proper Mass-going needed to be based on appropriate foundations, but in my childhood this was not understood by me or my family and our friends.

Priests and Bishops

Like most Catholic families, ours had a special reverence for the clergy. We knew that priests were very necessary for our Religion and that Religion was the foundation of our lives. Our faith had a simplicity. God made the world and wanted us to be happy. Adam and Eve had sinned and had been kicked out of Eden. God sent Jesus to conquer sin and death, which he did by dying on the Cross. Jesus established the Church so His work would be continued and all people could believe and be saved and have eternal life. Jesus entrusted the running of the Church to St Peter and the Apostles. They ordained men to succeed them and so the work of the Church continued through the centuries. The Pope ruled the Church from Rome and Bishop Doody ruled the local diocese. The priests did the work for the bishop. God called men to be priests so that the work of the Church would continue. While I was a student at St Mary's Boys' School, there were several ordinations in the adjacent cathedral. The ordinations were always huge functions. All of this would have impacted on me.

In their preaching the bishop and priests regularly said that God called young men and women to give their lives to God by service as priests, brothers and nuns. It was generally expected that a few men and women from the parish would go off each year to seminaries and novitiates. I used to see the trainee Marist Fathers from the local Novitiate. These students regularly came to the cathedral and added colour to ceremonies, so I knew that God was calling men and they were responding. From 1961 I felt called and intended to respond. I was going to be a man who did holy things. It was only later in life I realised I had to be a HOLY man to do holy things.

The priests at the cathedral regularly visited our home and had a lot of interaction with my parents and also with my brothers and sisters, especially through the YCW Movement. There was a tragic incident in 1961. My sister REDAC was away with the YCW to a rally at Gennedah when there was car accident and REDACTED was killed. This experience impacted on the whole parish. He was the parish's blue eyed boy.

When my grandfather became infirm in his old age the priests would bring him Holy Communion at home. We had own own sick call set and Mum was most dutiful about being prepared for the priest's visit. I was very inspired by all this. Grandfather died in REDACTE 1964 and had a huge funeral. I was conscious our family was well respected by the Armidale community. I was an altar server at his funeral.

I was an enthusiastic altar server and enjoyed being of service to the Church. I knew I had a temperament for being of service and I was very generous. Many years later I realised that as a boy I did not have an appropriate spirituality. My devotion and spiritual life was not deep. It needed to be nurtured, but no one had ensured that I was tutored, and I not not actively seek

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spiritual guidance.

As an enthusiastic altar server I was regularly in the company of priests. The local priests knew that I wanted to be a priest. They were very kind to me but I have no recollection of any of them helping me in the way I needed to be helped. I often went with them when they drove out to Mass at the parish outstations. Years later I realised I needed a spiritual guide who would develop my vocation and make it flourish, but as a boy I did not know what I needed, nor did I know how to articulate my problems.

Bishop Doody was very kind to me. I had a very close relationship with him. In 1965, when I was in 6th Class, he used to have a sleep in on Mondays and would celebrate Mass in the oratory in the Presbytery. Most Monday's I served Mass for him. He gave me some nice gifts which he brought back from Rome when he returned from the sessions of the Vatican Council. Looking back I am very conscious of enjoying his affection, but I am also conscious I never spoke to him about issues about myself which concerned me. This was a constant feature of my childhood, that no-one was able to get me to talk to them about the things which concerned me.

Teenage Years

After my primary schooling I went to secondary school at De La Salle College. I started in 1966, the college's Diamond Jubilee year. I was a day boy at a boarding school. I hated my time at secondary school, because I diliked the boarders who were a most unlikeable lot. My diaries for my secondary school days are full of comments about how unhappy I felt. I lacked confidence and I felt very insecure.

I was not excell at sports, nor was I a good scholar. I hated having to study subjects which I was not good at. Psychologists have told me that some part of my brain is very underdeveloped, and they have explained my frustrations. I had to study subjects I could not master, and rarely got to do the things I did enjoy. I wanted to learn short-hand and typing, but these were not on offer. I always responded well when a teacher gave me special attention.

In 1966, when I was in First Year, I was in the B class and was not offered Latin. The other students in the B class were not very bright. By hard work and with some encouragement from a few of the teachers, I became dux of the class. The following year (1967) I was put in the top class, but I was at the lower end of it and felt very frustrated that I was not as naturally bright as many of the others in my class.

My brother REDACT was called up for National Service in 1967 and was sent to Vietnam. Our family did not understand the war and we opposed the anti-war protests, because the protesters were disruptive. Our family did not have the skills for making proper assessments of issues and discussing them. We moved out to the farm to run it during REDACT's absence. Dad was still teaching but he worked at the farm when he came home each day. Living out of town had a bad impact on me. I did not go out to social events. Very few friends ever came out visiting. At the time I did not realise that I lacked the proper development of my social skills.

Bishop Doody died in 1968. This upset me a lot. Psychologists have told me that he was my main role model and mentor. Bishop Doody had a grand funeral, attended by Cardinal Gilroy, and a host of archbishops, bishops, priests, nuns and brothers and many people from around the diocese. It was the grandest ceremony I had ever attended to that date. It was my first experience of the grandeur of the Church and I was inspired by it.

Gerard Hanna, from the Armidale parish, was ordained in December 1968, by Bishop Henry Kennedy, who was an auxiliary bishop in Brisbane. He was in Armidale for a whole week and we started a good relationship. He was very friendly. In preparation for the ordination ceremony I read an ACTS pamphlet about the ceremony. It was the first time I had ever read anything about ceremonies.

Bishop Doody was succeeded by Bishop James Freeman, who was enthroned in Armidale on 12 December. His enthronement was another splendid occasion. During the Christmas holidays I want on a holiday with Father Stan Campbell. I was very impressed by his simplicity. He was a very good man and was an excellent raconteur of inspiring stories about the priesthood. He had a very positive influence on me and was a very good role model.

I had a particularly good year in 1969, when I flourished in English classes, which were taught by Brother Adrian. He brought out the best in me. I also held some positions of responsibly and did them well. Altar servers in 4th Form led their groups and I was my group leader. Because I understood ceremonies I was made the assistant Master of Ceremonies at big ceremonies in the cathedral that year. I have some photos of the Easter ceremonies.

Each Friday afternoon I used to serve Mass at the cathedral with my mate REDACTED. We were conscious we had vocations and went to the cathedral to pray that we would respond generously. The following year he went off to become a De La Salle Brother. I won a scholarship at the end of 4th Form in 1969. I won the annual prize for religion. The prize was presented by Bishop Freeman, who quipped, "here is your degree in Theology". Having his affirmation was very significant.

During 1970 I used to baby-sit the Bishop's House some nights when the priests were out. Quite often Bishop Freeman would come down from his room and have supper with me. We discussed numerous issues, especially things I was studying at school. He was very affirming, but I did not talk to him about things in my life which caused me great stress. Bishop Freeman became Archbishop of Sydney in July 1971.

I did not like 1970 and 1971. My diaries are full of comments about how unhappy I felt at school and at home. My brother REDACT returned home from Vietnam and became a very disturbed man, with heavy drinking and anti-social behaviour. The family did not know how to handle him. I was very conscious that our home had too much religion and not enough Christianity and practical love.

I did very poorly in the Higher School Certificate in 1971, so I repeated the year. I enjoyed 1972. I was a House Captain. In that year I took up refereeing Rugby League and did that for many years. I ran in the Cross Country Team in 1971 and 1972. My most favourite activity was with the cadet unit. I enjoyed camping and attended extra camps at Singleton to do specialist courses. I won the Cadet of the Year award in 1970 and was a Cadet Under Officer in 1972. My best subjects were English, History and Religion. Brother Adrian introduced us to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council. This was my first experience of a serious study of my faith. Unfortunately many students in the class were not interested in religion and they caused disruptions in class.

I did very well in the Higher School Certificate in 1972. My results were First levels in English and History, a Second in Geography, and very high marks in Third level Maths and Science, which I had handled well at the lower level. I won a scholarship to the university for 1973.

Initially I had thought about going to the seminary in 1973, but the Principal of De La Salle College discouraged me. He said I was far too immature. He was fully correct.

University

I was one of many men from my class who went to the University of New England in 1973. Most of us felt we were not well prepared for university life. I was not happy at the university. Initially I lived at home but later moved into St Albert's College. It was a single-sex college, not coeducational. I enjoyed being there, but I wish I had been at a coeducational college.

I attended the Chrism Mass at the cathedral in 1973. Bishop Kennedy gave a passionate appeal for priests and I was stirred, but was still very disturbed about my immaturity and many other problems in my life. I cannot remember much more about events that year, but my diary would have stories. Father Ross O'Brien was the diocesan vocations promoter and regularly visited me. He was very enthusiastic and radiated great joy in his ministry. My mates in St Albert's enjoyed his visits and called him The Priestcatcher.

One night in October 1973 I was visiting a woman at her college for the intention of fornicating. We did not have sex. She spent several hours pouring out her heart to me about her anxieties, she told me I was a gifted listener and a very compassionate person and that I would make a great priest, and then sent me back to my college. Within a few days I had met with Bishop Kennedy and preparations started for me to go to the seminary in 1974. With the benefit of hindsight I now see that I was very poorly prepared.

Some time late in 1973, when I was 20 years old, I was among a group of men who attended a vocations weekend at Strathfield, in the Archdiocese of Sydney. Father Ross O'Brien took me there. He also brought a few other young men from the diocese. There were some very impressive people there and I felt very inferior to them. Many of them were later with me in the seminary and some of them got ordained. Some of them have become outstanding priests, whom I genuinely respect and admire. There were others, however, at the vocations weekend who were very much like me. Many of them became my best mates. One of the blokes I met that weekend had just left the Army. We became very close friends and have continued our friendship for 32 years.

Getting Ready to go to the Seminary

During the vocations weekend at Strathfield I shared with others the details of my understanding of my vocation. At that time I was 20 years old and was a First Year university student.

There were many of us who had felt a call to priesthood from early childhood. Others seem to have discovered a vocation after they left school. Some said they wanted to go to the seminary "to test their vocation". I thought that was weird. I knew I had a vocation and I wanted to be a priest and that is why I had to go to the seminary. I believed that God had called me and I would be trained at the seminary and that nothing more was required for me to become a priest. I gave no serious thought about the need for me to respond appropriately. With the benefit of hindsight I now realize that I had not sought or received guidance from priests to help me discern my vocation and the appropriate means for responding. This would be an ongoing issue for much of my life.

Up to that time my role models for priesthood were the priests who had served in my home

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parish. The three main role models were Dean Fisher, Father Bernie Melville and Bishop Doody. Father Stan Campbell and Father Ross O'Brien were a positive influence. There were other priests whom I admired but their talents were different to mine, so I could never see myself doing the good works they were doing. There were no priests I could discuss things with. Father Bernard Flood tried to be helpful, and often asked me some key questions, but I never gave appropriate answers. I never discussed my calling with anyone in a mature way. I did not have a mature understanding of my calling and how I should respond to it.

So, my decision to commence studies for the priesthood was made without guidance and the proper discernment. I had no real understanding what was expected of me in the seminary.

During our time in the seminary we were regularly asked to explain the nature of our vocations, and I was able to speak in public and in private about what led me to the seminary but I could not articulate my vocation as being an expression of a deep commitment to Christ and the Church. Unlike some of my peers who had 'on the road to Damascus' experiences, or other religious experiences, all I could say was that I felt called to be a priest. I had no feeling of "*caritas Christi urget nos*"; there was no major inner force driving me or calling me, such as I feel nowadays. So, my response to my vocation lacked depth. I was not alone. Like many others in my seminary class, I could not speak at length about my calling because I did not understand it, and therefore, there was not much I could say about it. While some of my peers could speak about their strong personal faith and a call to share that faith with others so as to win many souls for Christ, I found comfort from mates who also could not verbalise their calling and who looked with suspicion on those who seemed to be religious zealots.

I was never challenged to discern my calling and to test if it was genuine, or to explore what a calling to priesthood should evoke in me. Sadly, I was very immature and my immaturity seems not to have been properly challenged by those involved in my priestly formation. Nowadays I have a very strong calling to be a Christian and I want to share Christianity with others, but when I was getting ready to go to the seminary in 1974 I did not feel like that.

2 The life of John Farrell in the seminary

In those days there were three diocesan seminaries for men who were preparing for the priesthood in New South Wales. Mature men over the age of 25 when they started, studied at St Paul's National Seminary Kensington for four years. Those under the age of 25 when they started studied Philosophy at St Columba's College, Springwood, in the mountains west of Sydney, for three years, and then went to St Patrick's College Manly for three years of Theology. They were ordained deacons at the end of 6th year. Ordinations to the priesthood were held in August of their 7th year.

Before starting at the Springwood seminary in 1974 I was interviewed by Monsignor James McCosker, a prominent Sydney priest who ran the Archdiocesan welfare agency. He had some psychological training. It was a simple interview, but it was the only formal assessment I had before becoming a seminarian. I had to send references to the seminary. I understand that the Principal of De La Salle College did not recommend me.

St Columba's College, Springwood

In February 1974 I was among the 34 men who commenced studies at St Columba's College, Springwood. I was there for 1974, 1975 and 1976. In my class there were two students for the

Armidale diocese. The other student, who came from Tamworth, did not like me and has spent his whole life being antagonistic to me.

When I started at the seminary in February 1974 I was excited about taking this step, but I lacked maturity. I had little real experience compared to many of my peers. I was quite dependent, I lacked confidence, I was fairly narrow-minded, and I was a negative thinker. These were traits I had inherited from my father. I also lacked many positive qualities. One area where I excelled was that I was very responsible with my money, unlike many of my peers. I was also very responsible in the use of a motor vehicle. I have a perfect driving record. Many people used to confide in me because I was a fairly compassionate person. I enjoyed the confidence of many other students who found me very worthy of their trust. I was also very dependable for waking them up in the morning or passing on a message. On the other hand, I was very undomesticated and I did not know how to wash clothes or cook. I was punctual, dependable and generous but also confused and immature. Psychologists later explained that these are traits of an ISTJ on the Meyers-Briggs Personality Temperament Indicator. I was big on service and dependability but very low on self-confidence and independence. I was critical of others and unassertive. I did not have an ability to stretch my boundaries and move into new territory. Rather I stayed in my comfort zones. I had a fetish about clean shoes and punctuality. Psychologists have helped me see that my priorities in those days were quite disordered.

I was one of 34 new students in First Philosophy in 1974. Our rooms were allocated in order of our seniority, based on age. The toilet door halfway down the corridor marked the division between those students who 'had been in the world' for a year or more and those who were fresh out of school. The difference between the two groups was very noticeable. I was No 9. Ahead of me were a few 22 year olds, several 23 year olds, and a 24 year old. Four of us turned 21 in 1974. I did not celebrate my 21st birthday. Psychologists later explained that my inability or reluctance to celebrate myself were indicators of the problems I had.

We older students had been accustomed to independence, especially in matters such as smoking and drinking, motor cars and spending money. Some of my new mates had been out of school for several years, had lived away from home, had earned an income, smoked and drank several schooners of beer each day. Having come from a poor family I was very responsible with my money and this trait continued throughout the seminary and afterwards. Psychologists have told me that I lacked the ability to enjoy life. I had many priorities wrong.

Like some of my closest mates, I seemed to have no mind of my own and habitually expounded my father's opinions as the Gospel truth and the only opinion on many issues. I lacked broad experience and was narrow-minded on many issues about which many of my peers had a more mature attitude. For instance, my attitudes and behaviours reflected the Farrell family's attitude towards punctuality, tidiness, and hospitality rather than something I had worked out for myself.

My diaries have many examples of how I was lacking in independence. I used to cling to others. I liked to be needed. I was enthusiastic for being of service to others rather than doing what I was in the seminary to do: studying and proper formation for priesthood by attention to spiritual development.

I had little interest in politics and current affairs. I cannot recall having any special interests, and I was very conscious I was a poor conversationalist. I was known as someone who listened rather than being someone who talked. I thought I was using gifts God had given me. Psychologists, however, have told me that I lacked the ability to trust others and this was

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indicative of serious problems I had. I lacked a proper ability to relate to my peers, especially those in my intimate circle.

I had a really good sense of humour and laughed a lot. Unlike many of my peers I was never moody. I was stable. I thought I was very cool, calm and collected. In fact, I was very inhibited. Psychologists have told me that I lacked the ability to be natural. I desperately needed affirmation and encouragement, but rarely got it for academic or sporting achievements, and I felt under appreciated. So, when I started at the seminary in 1974, I was 20 years old, but was not as mature as many of my peers.

Most of us had no genital sexual experience. One of my mates had been in the Army and had a girl friend and we all thought he had been sexually active and therefore we thought 'he was a real man'. Most of us said we would not know how to have sex, and we were all scared of sex in case we got a girl pregnant because we knew nothing about contraception. We were virgins out of necessity rather than desire.

All this is relevant for several reasons. Firstly, my father had never discussed the birds and bees with me, and we never related at a level where such issues or other matters were discussed. This is indicative of an overall lack of proper communication skills within the Farrell family. This was typical of the time, but unfortunate for me. My father had not helped me become a man or to be manly. Psychologists have told me that like many of my peers in the seminary I was lacking in a proper maturity, especially psycho-sexual development.

Unlike many of my peers who were the eldest child in their families, I was the youngest child in my family. I had no experience of exercising authority over my siblings. Others had, and that gave them self-confidence and trained some of them to be natural leaders. I was never a natural leader. I was never a person who could naturally lead others.

Dr William Murray was the Rector of the Springwood seminary. He became Bishop of Wollongong in July 1975 and was succeeded as Rector by Father John Walsh, who had been on the staff for many years.

I was not well prepared for going to the seminary. I did not understand what was expected of me. When I arrived there I was badly influenced by some of my peers who always wanted to do things their way and who disliked the authority in the seminary. This found expression in our attitudes to our studies and in our relationships with authority figures.

My academic record was less than it could have been. I failed Latin and barely passed Greek. I did not give sufficient attention to the many units of Sacred Scripture and I had almost no interest in Philosophy. Many of my peers could see no relevance in these subjects. I found the Christian Doctrine course to be highly informative and interesting, but I did not do the required work for good grades in my essays or examinations.

Getting Help

In theory, Spiritual Directors were there to help seminarians to discern their vocations and help seminarians to flourish. Father Michael McGloin was the priest in charge of First Year students. I did not enjoy a good relationship with him and thus I missed out on the guidance he could offer me. This continued for my whole time at the Springwood seminary. With the benefit of hindsight I now realise it was out of pride that I was unwilling to co-operate with Father

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McGloin. I did not have the proper humility.

During 1974 we had a seven day retreat, which was given by Bishop Ignatius Doggett, from a religious order. Most of us were too immature to respond appropriately to this retreat, but it did make some impact. Several things from the retreat were very memorable and some were quite challenging. In particular, I remember that the bishop was sitting at a desk during one of his talks to us. He took off his zucchetto and sat it on the desk. He then filled it with his life and offered it up to God. But, he then dramatically stopped and started reclaiming things. He said that is how many of us were: we were only half-hearted in the offering of ourselves. This was a very accurate description of what I was doing in my preparation for the priesthood.

When Father John Walsh took over as the Rector at Springwood in 1975 he was very helpful for me personally. Knowing that I had problems he sent me to see a specialist to get help. For several months I used to leave the seminary one afternoon each fortnight and go to Sydney to meet with a nun named sister Bernadette Curtin. My sessions with her were very helpful. Sadly, these sessions came to an end because she had to go away for some reason. No arrangements were made for me to obtain help from anyone else.

Progress at Springwood

Although I did not apply myself to my studies as well as I should have at St Columba's College Springwood, I usually managed to pass most subjects. Occasionally I got high marks. Exams were held at the end of each of the three terms each year. Little by little time passed and I was promoted from first Year, to Second Year and then into Third Year.

Each student in the seminary was assigned to undertake various duties for the good running of the college. We all knew that when we performed these duties we were under observation from our peers and the staff, so they could see our abilities and leadership qualities. My jobs included being a chapelarian, to sweep and polish the chapel floor. I learned a lot from that job and took great pride in my work. I was also a college printer. In my final year I ran the college shop. This too gave me a lot of satisfaction. The students elected me to be the House Secretary in 1976. I was always a good secretary, because I knew what had to be done and I was very efficient.

Having been a boarder at a residential college when I was at university, I knew some of the ropes and made a point of having a lot of fun at Sprigwood. There were many enjoyable activities to pursue, such as bushwalking or gardening. On the whole, in spite of certain problems, I was quite happy and I have many wonderful memories of my three years at Springwood.

We had two weeks of holidays in May and August and a long Christmas break from the beginning of December until the end of February. I used to travel home on the train from Sydney to Armidale. Coming home was always disappointing. Although I was warmly welcomed, I always felt distressed that no-one in the family engaged me in conversation about things I wanted to talk about. The connversation was mostly a one way flow of information about what had been happening in Armidale while I was away. My diaries have many comments about how emotionally distressed I was at home.

During the Christmas vacation most seminarians worked to earn enough money to last the whole year. Many of us worked in December and January but kept February free for having a holiday. While I was a Springwood seminarian I had some interesting holiday jobs, I met a lot of

interesting people, and I get a better understanding of how other people live. I was able to attend Mass each day and attend to my spiritual duties. Bishop Kennedy and the local priests were very hospitable and I regularly visited them at the presbytery. On Sundays I served as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist at Mass.

I had several holidays with some of my classmates. In August many seminarians travelled the length of the State, to attend ordinations. I always enjoyed these trips. I met a lot of priests and enjoyed their company. I felt very comfortable with priests. Some of my mates did not mix with priests, and mixed only with lay people. I knew there was a clergy culture, with its own rules. I knew that many priests had problems but that they persevered. I saw myself easily fitting in as a priest.

From time to time seminarians dropped out. There were some very strange people at Springwood seminary and I was never surprised when they left. Each year a few blokes dropped out of my class. Usually I was the first person to know that someone was leaving because that person would have been confiding in me for several weeks. Initially many people got unsettled when someone would leave, but as the years passed we grew used to the fact that only about one third of those who started at the seminary would get ordained. Several blokes who were my good mates left the seminary, and I missed them. The people who remained were not always close, so we had to learn to cope.

Sadly, I did not satisfy all the academic requirements at the end of 1976. I failed Latin and an oral examination in 1976, and therefore I was not awarded the Diploma at the end of 1976. Several other students, including the one from Tamworth, were not awarded the Diploma. Some of the others who did get the award got it at pass level. The point is that I was not very differend from many of my fellow students.

Bishop David Cremin gave my class a retreat at the end of 1976 and presided over the ceremony in the college chapel when most of my class were formally admitted as Candidates for the Priesthood. Several in the class were not admitted and were then excluded from the seminary. So although I was not particularly successful in the seminary, I was still there and I was on the road to the priesthood.

St Patrick's College Manly

My class moved to St Patrick's College Manly, where we started in 1977. I was then aged 23 years and a half. By then our class had lost about 16 of the 34 who had started in 1974. That attrition rate was consistent with previous classes.

Manly is on the penisular on the northern entrance to Sydney Harbour. The college there consisted of the Seminary for the formation of priests and the Catholic Institute of Sydney, which was a teaching body for theology students, whether lay students or seminarians.

In my first year at Manly, Father Neil Collins was the President of the seminary. The deacons were in residence, so the college consisted on students in Years 4, 5, 6 and 7. The total number of students was relatively small.

Some students from the Maitland diocese joined my class in 1977. They had not been at Springwood, but had done their Philosophy studies at Edmund Gleeson House in the Maitland diocese while attending Newcastle University. The four new students seemed very mature.

None of them stayed long at Manly.

In spite of some emotional disturbances, my first year at Manly in 1977 was very successful.

Great changes occurred in 1978. The Springwood seminary was closed at the end of 1978. Henceforth all the seminarians would be at Manly. From 1978 the leadership pyramid was inverted and 1978 was a very bad year. Instead of the seminary being top heavy with leadership from the top, the greater number of young students dominated the place and immaturity was rife.

Bishop Patrick Murphy was the new seminary President. In his opening address to us he said: "You are all men and not boys so this college will be run by guidelines, not rules. But to ensure the guidelines work, these are the rules." He ruled with a rod of iron. Morale dropped. The Easter ceremonies, which had been so uplifting in previous years, were flat. We all said that Christ did not rise that Easter. Many students left the seminary. Many left from my class. There had been 14 students in the class at the start of the year, but the year ended with only eight. I was not one of them. Things had not gone well for me and in August I was told not to return after the August holidays. I was technically on leave.

I worked in Armidale for several months. Pope Paul VI died during this time and so did his successor, John Paul I. The non-Italian, John Paul II, was elected in October 1978.

After saving up enough money, I left Australia in June 1979 and travelled the world. I had many spiritually uplifting experiences and knew I certainly had a vocation to be a priest, but my ability to respond to it had been handicapped by my shortcomings.

Here I digress slightly to introduce Father Rex Brown, a priest in the Lismore diocese. He has an outstanding intellect and is noted for his insights into human beings. I cannot remember when I actually first met him, but I had heard a lot about him from classmates from the Lismore diocese. That diocese had many students in the seminary, and they were in regular contact with Father Brown. In due course I met him and he took a keen interest in my affairs and was very helpful. He kept in touch with me while I was on leave from Manly and encouraged me to apply to return to the Manly seminary from September 1979. Father Brown arranged for me to be assessed by a psychologist, who duly concluded that I should be readmitted to the seminary. No steps were taken, however, to ensure things were in place so that I would make good progress and flourish. I returned to Manly in September 1979 and resumed 5th Year.

The class I joined was made up of relicts from other classes. My new class consisted mostly of men who had left and come back. There were only two of the originls in the class which had started at Springwood in 1975. Those two survivors did not welcome those of us who had come back. The class was very disjointed, with no unity. This was a disappointment for me and had a bad impact on me, but I had returned to Manly with enthusiasm and I threw myself into being a good seminarian. I did very well in the exams at the end of that year.

Dr Grove Johnson, who was the liturgy lecturer, was appointed the seminary President for 1980. He saw a lot of good in me and encouraged me.

At Manly I did not enjoy a good relationship with Father Brian Yates, the Spiritual Director, and so I missed out on all that Brian had to offer. He was a very positive influence on many of my peers who have gone on to be outstandingly successful.

We had two weeks of holidays in May and August and a long Christmas break from the

beginning of December until the end of February. Coming home continued to be disappointing, because I always felt distressed that no-one in the family engaged me in conversation about things I wanted to talk about. During my time in the seminary my family moved back and forth from the farm to town. Quite often my mates would come for a visit and stay a few days. They all found my father difficult to engage in conversation, but found Mum delightful. After meeting some of my mates' parents I was envious of the relationship they had. There were some others, however, whose situation was far worse than mine.

Like most of my mates, I worked during the Christmas vacation. This was very character building. I attended Mass each day and spent time in prayer. Bishop Kennedy and the local priests continued to be very hospitable and I regularly visited them at the presbytery. I regularly assisted at Mass and other functions such as baptisms, weddings and funerals. I regularly served as a reader and an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist at Mass.

In August 1977 many seminarians went to the Lismore diocese for two ordinations, then came to my diocese for the ordination of Peter Kneipp in Glen Innes. This was a huge celebration. Afterwards we went across to the Lismore diocese for two more ordinations. In 1978 a lot of seminarians came with me to the ordination of Richard Gleeson at Narrabri. He had trained at Kensington. Many of us travelled to the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn in 1978 for the ordination of Chris Kirwin, whose family lived at Kootingal, near Tamworth. I always enjoyed these trips to ordinations. I continued to enjoy meeting priests and I always enjoyed their company.

In August 1980 seven of the men withwhom I had started in 1974 were ordained and this was a very special experience for me. Naturally I was disappointed that I was not among them. Many of our former classmates came to the celebrations. Some of them were still bitter and unsettled. I assisted some of the newly ordained at their Masses of Thanksgiving the next day. I started looking forward to my own celebrations, especially my diaconate ordination which was only several months away.

During 1980 I did an external counselling course with the St John of God Brothers at Burwood. I had a close relationship with the director, Father Colin McKay. Before my ordination he took me out to dinner. I wanted to tell him that I had all sorts of problems, but I didn't. A day never passes without my regretting that I did not tell him about my problems.

I completed all the academic requirements for the Roman Bachelor of Theology degree, and finished at the Manly seminary late in November 1980. I had also completed the Latin requirements and the other subject which I had previously failed and was belatedly awarded the Springwood Diploma.

Reflections about my time in the Seminary

Many of my peers were very successful in the seminary and some of them have gone on to be very successful priests. The seminary had served them well. I do not attribute my failures to the seminary but to my own deficiencies.

The memory of the regime is still fresh in my mind.

My understanding was that the seminary at Springwood operated this way. A man would be considered worthy for ordination if he persevered in the seminary and did not display obvious

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defects. So, if he overtly kept the rules and made good academic progress he was on the road to ordination. If, however, he broke the rules and was unsuccessful in his studies, then he was in trouble. The wise student kept a low profile and made sure he passed his exams. I did not keep as low a profile as I should have, but I did pass most of my exams, but not as well as I should have done. Consequently, I did not cope with the regime as well as I should have.

At Manly there was a distinct change in the nature of the regime. The idea that "an absence of obvious deficiencies" was sufficient for advancement towards priesthood was replaced with a demand that the student show "positive qualities". He had to show that he was worthy and suitable for priesthood. An issue which highlighted the question of suitability was the ability to relate to the lay students.

By and large many seminarians were elitist. There was a perceived hierarchy in the Church, starting with the Pope and the Roman Authorities; and moving down the scale:

The Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney;
Other Archbishops;
Bishops;
Parish Priests;
Influential Nuns & Brothers;
Middle Clergy;
Junior Clergy
Seminarians
Non-influential Nuns & Brothers;
The Laity!

The majority of the people were in the last category, so anyone who was in the higher categories had a position of prestige. There was a belief that respect came with the job, rather than the person who had the office having to earn respect by a good life and manner.

Lay students in the seminary upset and threatened this hierarchy. They saw themselves as equals because they were fellow students and had theological knowledge which was often superior to the seminarians.

The seminarians made diverse responses:

1) Some of the young blades with charm and personality befriended the lay students, especially the females;
2) Some completely ignored the lay students;
3) Some were actively hostile to the lay students.

I mostly belonged to the middle group. I lacked the maturity to interact with them. Moreover, it did not augur well for my priesthood and relationships with the laity and the people I was expected to serve.

The last two of the above groups should be studied closely. Many lay students had the ability to make any shy, insecure or incompetent seminarians feel inadequate and this was greatly resented by such seminarians. Lay students expected seminarians to have leadership and personality, to be dynamic and vital, to be sincere and wholesome, to be Christlike and full of the Spirit. Sadly, many were not and they depended on the hierarchical structure to make up for their inadequacies. I was a case in point. I believed that ordination would make me a priest and that the people

would respect me. I clearly had a wrong understanding of the nature of priesthood in the modern world. I was like many of the seminarians. Lay students caused many candidates for the priesthood to question whether they had the right qualities for priesthood. When they did not have these qualities then they adopted a defensive position in clericalism. I was never a clericalist, but I lacked the ability to relate in a mature way with the lay students.

I once witnessed a seminarian being very hostile to an acolyte from a neighbouring parish who turned up at the seminary on the feast of Corpus Christi and asked if he could wear his robes and be part of the procession. The seminarian took this as a personal insult, that a layman should try to join in with 'the clergy'.

For the seminarian, the seminary was *home* as well as the *place* where he studied. Lay students were often perceived as violating the privacy of the home. The lay students, on the other hand, saw the seminary as a place where they studied, and they had the same feelings as all students have for their college: there was the sense of belonging. So, a contributing factor was that the physical make up of the seminary buildings at Manly meant that outsiders invaded our privacy. It would have been better to have had separate buildings: a place where the seminarians lived and a separate place where theology was taught to all who attended that second place. I never resented sharing my college with lay students, but I never mixed with them freely and with a proper maturity.

A second problem in my time was that the small number of students in Manly College meant that those who lacked good interpersonal skills found it difficult to hide their inadequacies. This applied just as much to the staff as to the students. Respect did not come down with the rations; people were expected to earn respect. I had great difficulty in relating to people in a mature manner.

Summing up: At Springwood, I did not fit into the mould comfortably but I was allowed through; at Manly, where more was demanded of me, I responded even less favourably, but was still advanced to Holy Orders.

Readiness for Ordination as a Deacon

I was often in strife at Springwood and Manly, but I did not interpret these as doubts about my vocation to the priesthood. Rather I saw these events as "difficulties", caused by my own shortcomings. My response was to persevere. I lacked the ability honestly to recognise that although I was called to the priesthood, my problems made me unsuitable for the priesthood and a life of holiness, devotion, love and service.

I was not alone. Many of my closest seminary friends also had to persevere. We believed we were called, so we persevered. We did not have doubts about our vocations. We just did not respond in a proper manner to ensure we would have good formation and be good priests.

Many of us did not associate "vocation" and "priesthood". By the time we had got to Manly most of us presumed we would get ordained. I am ashamed now when I reflect on how poorly I responded to God's call for me to be a priest. As a seminarian I was not serious about preparing for the priesthood. The seminary had become my home. I enjoyed being a seminarian, living a carefree life while awaiting ordination. Personal growth, deepening of faith, dying to self etc were not on my agenda. I presumed I would be ordained but did not seriously consider what priesthood was about.

During 1980 – the last year when I lived at Manly seminary – my life was far better than many other students, especially some in the class below mine. Some were out at the pub almost every night and were drinking heavily. Some were regularly involved in wild sexual activity with several other seminarians. Some were coarse, arrogant and exceedingly offensive to many of our fellow students. I was liked by Grove Johnson (the seminary's President) but some of the academic staff had concerns about me.

As a class, we did not have to vote about whether we thought each of us was suitable for ordination as deacons. I believe that if we had voted, I would have voted against two of my peers and some of them would have voted against me. Some of my classmates at Manly that year also had great inadequacies as men who were about to enter the ministry of word and sacrament. Perhaps, because we were so similar I did not stand out as too peculiar or unsuitable.

Reading through my diaries and examining the evidence, I now have grave doubts that in 1980, the last year I was in the seminary, I was suitable for ordination to the diaconate. I had completed the academic requirements, but I had failed to form good habits for the spiritual life: mental prayer, meditation, and examination of conscience. My life was compartmentalised and I had not addressed serious problems.

How my peers in the seminary regarded me

Throughout my seven years in the seminary I was not generally held in high regard by my peers. I was a confusing combination of being caring and compassionate, yet a source of concern because of my immaturity.

I was a very reserved person, who usually hid my light, such as it was, under a barrel. Many people found me very trustworthy and dependable, but I was never a popular person, unlike some of my peers who were very personable characters, extroverts, and gifted conversationalist on social occasions. I was never my own man and always lacked self-confidence.

My immaturity, my lack of balance, my indifference to some of my studies and my criticisms of others caused intense resentment among some of my peers. I was often aware that some people criticised me savagely behind my back.

A few others knew I was a man with compassion, mercy and kindness. I was often actively involved in other people's personal affairs. I was not much of a social talker but many people found me a sympathetic listener, so people often confided in me. Some people saw me as very confused about myself, but very caring of others. I was never a strong and independent person. I needed others and their problems so that I would be needed and would then feel valued.

At Springwood, I was not a competent sportsman, but I played squash, tennis, football, billiards and pool. Many of my peers were active members of the seminary bush fire brigade but I never joined it. I used to spend a lot of time alone. Psychologists have told me that this was indicative of problems I had.

At Manly I did not make a mark academically or in any other positive way. My attention was often drawn by my peers to my many shortcomings. The closer I came to ordination the greater the criticism among my peers for my lack of prudence, and my general lack of maturity. In the minds of many, I was not an integrated person, and therefore I was not suitable for service as a minister of Word and Sacrament.

Seminary Preparation for Celibacy

I knew that during my ordination as a deacon I would make a promise of celibacy. This section will reflect on how well the seminary had prepared me for this serious obligation.

At both Springwood and Manly there were talks on celibacy, but always at a theoretical level rather than on practical issues. No attempt was ever made to discuss the issue of sexuality and how to cope with sexual urges. Worse still, the seminary did not address the fact that many students were sexually active with each other.

I have no recollection of ever hearing a useful talk about sexuality during my time at Springwood and Manly. One of my mates in a class below mine said that the only time he heard a useful talk on sex was in his final year at Manly seminary when Father Pat Ryan, who was on the academic staff, spoke to a group of seminarians about homosexual activity in the seminary.

On many occasions the students at Springwood and Manly expressed their wish to have outside priests come in and talk about real life in the priesthood, especially issues of sexuality. At Springwood, I was conscious that a few men in my class knew almost nothing about women's sexual organs so I asked for something to be done. As a result, Father Ed Barry. the Bursar, gave a lecture, which I still remember. Sadly, on the whole, the priests on the seminary staff had no ability to talk man to man about sexual matters. The sort of priests who could have spoken from their experience of failure and having to work through it, and who were at ease in discussing these matters, were not allowed to come to the seminary to talk to the students. Consequently, students were never prepared for the reality of life as priests.

Something happened at Springwood and must be noted because of its major effect on my life at the time and later.

In my final year at Springwood (1976) seminarians were divided into discussion groups with a priest as the group moderator. One of my mates was in a group led by Father John Hill. I was not in John Hill's group, but after each meeting my mate told me what had happened. His group meeting quickly became a sensitivity session drawing on the then highly popular works of the Jesuit priest, John Powell. He was the author of books such as *Why am I afraid to tell You I Love you?* and *Why am I afraid too tell you who I am?* Following the suggestions in these books, the members of Hill's group started to reveal themselves to one another. This caused a lot of emotional disturbance among the group.

The members of Hill's group became overtly tactile, hugging and caressing one another, quite often in public. Most of the group went beyond normal barriers and had inappropriate expressions of their feelings, including genital sexual activity and the intense desire for it. Several members of the group, including my mate, were adversely effected. Having whetted their appetites and having found it enjoyable, they became almost insatiable, as they craved for more.

Physical intimacy began to be common place in the seminary. These experiences of homosexual activity dulled consciences and allowed some seminarians to be fairly undisturbed about continuing to engage in similar activity in the seminary, and later in their Ministry. Many of us became fairly regularly involved in emotional entanglements and sexual activity with other seminarians.

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So, not only had the seminary not taught the seminarians how to live celibate lives as sexual beings, but a counter-culture had emerged which found expression in regular sexual activity which some students continued during their years in the seminary and afterwards.

The fact that many of us were not disturbed by our sexual activity would indicate that we had compartmentalised our lives and were not integrated human beings. It speaks poorly of the seminary system that this problem was not identified, addressed, and rectified.

3 My life in the Ordained Ministry

I was ordained a deacon by Bishop Kennedy in the Armidale cathedral on 28 November 1980. I was 27 years old. Tony McLeod from the Lismore diocese was the deacon at the ceremony. He was later ordained a priest but left the priesthood. John Cox from the Wollongong diocese was the witness to my declaration of celibacy during my ordination ceremony. John completed his training at Manly and was ordained a deacon on 8 December 1981 at Wollongong. John was ordained a priest on 20 November 1982. He subsequently left the active ministry.

After my ordination as a deacon, I served in several parishes as an apprentice, receiving on the job training in diverse types of parishes. I served in South Tamworth for a month, then Narrabri for all of Lent, then on the Tribunal for a few weeks, then Ashford for a few weeks and finally at Moree for a few months. Constantly moving and having to meet so many new people was very unsettling and I did not begin the ordained ministry well. I did not enjoy being a deacon. I was not competent in many things which I had to do and I felt very inadequate in my relationships with many lay people. On several occasions I tried to talk to priests about my stresses, but these priests lacked good counselling skills and were unable to help me.

I did my week-long pre-ordination retreat with my fellow deacons in August 1981. It was unsatisfactory because none of us interacted. The others were ordained in August, but my bishop was overseas, so I had to wait his return for my ordination. I spent three very enjoyable weeks in the Quirindi parish with Father Stan Campbell.

I was ordained a priest at Armidale by Bishop Henry Kennedy on 21 September 1981, the feast of St Matthew. We wore red vestments. Tom Llewellyn from Lismore was the deacon. He was ordained a priest but soon left the active ministry. I was presented to the bishop by Monsignor Frank Ryan (the Vicar General), and I was vested in my priest's vestments by Monsignor Fisher and Father Richard Shanahan.

During the ceremony, I was questioned by the ordaining prelate, who then declared me suitable for the office of presbyter. The people were supposed to show their consent by clapping, but no one clapped. I have always been conscious that I was ordained without overt consent from the People of God. It was a bad omen for the future.

The next morning I celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving. I wore Bishop Doody's gold vestments. Several priests had declined my request to be the occasional preacher, so I preached the homily myself. I retained a printed copy. It encapsulates my life and shows my lack of suitably for the priesthood. Although I was able to talk theologically about the priesthood, nowhere is there evidence of a strong, integrated personal faith. I really should not have been ordained a priest at that time.

Moree

On 11 November 1981 I took up an appointment at Moree, as assistant to Monsignor Frank Ryan. Father Bernard Flood was the other assistant. It was an unhappy home and I did not cope well with the stress.

On the other hand, I was young and very enthusiastic about some things. I was a keen liturgist and set in place the infrastructure for some grand liturgies. I trained altar servers to do all the jobs for solemn ceremonies. On one occasion Bishop Kennedy remarked he had not experienced such ceremonies anywhere else in the diocese. We had incense and holy water and candles and processions. I found it very satisfying.

I was also responsible for the parish bulletin and enjoyed doing that because it was the main organ for effective communication. I also did the house rosters so that priests would be in the right place at the right time. There were few outlets for my organising and administrative skills. I also did a fair bit of work for the Tribunal and discovered I had a flair for it. I enjoyed taking the evidence, sorting it, discarding what was irrelevant and focusing the facts to draw the right conclusions. I also enjoyed helping people on a one-to-one basis. I was quite good in the confessional box and was quite popular among the people. In short, I was work orientated and got a lot of satisfaction from any work which allowed me to use my skills.

I enjoyed going to the outstations and I did some very good work at Pallamallawa, where I used to go on Thursday evenings and remain overnight and take religious classes in the State school on Friday morning. People there appreciated me and worked with me closely. It was very satisfying.

From time to time I would take a few days off and go to Sydney and spend time with my mates. I always went to Sydney for special clergy celebrations such as the Manly reunions, which were held on the second Tuesday of Easter. Unlike some priests who did not meet with other priests, I enjoyed the company of priests. In my own diocese priests regular met for Second Rite Reconciliations in Advent, Easter and in preparation for First Communion and Confirmation. I always enjoyed these gatherings.

Moree was fairly isolated so I did not take a day off each week but I took a few days off each month. I would leave on Sunday afternoon and drive to Inverell where the priests were very hospitable. I would celebrate their evening Mass and then enjoy their company before driving to Armidale next day. This stop-off break ensured I arrived in Armidale relaxed. After spending some quality time with my family and friends I would leave on Thursday, have lunch at Inverell and then go to Pallamallawa for the evening Mass. This was my routine for three years.

Sadly, I had not cultivated good habits for the spiritual life and had quickly got into difficulties. I was most irregular in prayer and was often greatly lacking in prudence and maturity. Before long I became involved in inappropriate relations. My situation was reported to the Parish Priest who notified the bishop and I was sent on leave from April 1984. So ended my first appointment.

Most of the other men who had been ordained in 1981 also went off the rails. Several of them got women pregnant. Others were active in homosexual affairs.

A psychologist was very helpful and explained my problems. He recommended that I should be

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readmitted to ministry. He expected that I would be given ongoing care.

Tamworth

In July 1984 I was appointed to Tamworth. It was not a good appointment but no other parish priest would take me. Initially, for a year, I was one of four priests in the presbytery. One of the priests did not speak to me and always treated me with contempt. It was not a happy appointment for me, but I persevered. That other priest later moved and has since left the priesthood. Sadly, during the first year of my time in Tamworth most of my energy was spent on coping with life rather than on ministry. My heart was not in my ministry which I increasingly treated as a job. I rarely prayed. From then onwards my ministry was all down hill, but from time to time things improved. I was conscious of unresolved personal problems and these disturbed me. I was a man doing holy things, but I was not a holy man because my life was compartmentalised. It is now quite obvious that I had not nurtured my vocation, and that I was not a fit and proper person for effective Christian ministry.

Tamworth was a very busy parish with a lot of routine work. I found some outlets for my talents. I also did the house rosters so that priests would be in the right place at the right time. I did a lot of good work at Nazareth House and used to have lunch there each Friday with the retired priests. They always treated me very kindly. I did a lot of television work. That was a lot of fun. I became a good preacher and many people came to hear me because I was talking to them at a level they could understand. I was quite good in the confessional box and knew that parishioners appreciated my service. For many years I had been a football referee and I did a lot of that in Tamworth. This brought me into contact with a lot of lapsed Catholics and I was able to encourage them to return to the practice of the faith. I did regular exercise to keep me fit. So my sporting interests were beneficial at several levels.

While serving in the Tamworth parish, I did a lot of hospital ministry which was very draining. I needed something to stimulate my mind, so I did a lot of work for the Tribunal. This work appealed to me and I was good at it. In fact, a few times when I was in Sydney, I did interviews for some of my priest friends who did not like Tribunal work. I would have liked to become a specialist but was not offered the chance. Some of the priests in the diocese were invited to undertake extra training. I was not invited, so I then refused to do any more work for the Tribunal. Henceforth I devoted my energies to other pursuits.

Father Gerard Hanna the Administrator of Tamworth went on sick leave after major surgery late in 1985 and was away for several months. Curiously, Bishop Kennedy did not appoint anyone to be in charge, so I assumed command and worked very closely and amicably with the other assistant priest, Father Ted Wilkes. Life was very busy but we had some enjoyable times together. I was now beginning to enjoy my ministry in Tamworth.

In July 1986 I went with a group of priest mates for a holiday in the Northern Territory to look at Aboriginal missions. Some of my mates were drunk most of the time so the holiday had a lot of stresses. I spent a lot of time with a priest who was devout and balanced and I thoroughly enjoyed his company. The two of us later had a holiday together overseas in 1992.

Another reason why I was happy was that I was in love. I had fallen in love with one of the nurses at the hospital. I used to spend a lot of my free time with her. She was a very positive influence on me. She left Tamworth in 1987 to undertake another certificate. I was sorry to see her go.

Pope John Paul II visited Australia in November 1986. Father Wilkes took six busloads of parishioners to Brisbane on a 24 hour excursion to see the Pope. I took one busload to Sydney, and we stayed overnight. The Pope celebrated Mass at Randwick Racecourse. Father Frank Le Fevre from South Tamworth and I even managed to meet Pope John Paul in person. This was very special.

While I was serving in Tamworth a group of American priests came to Australia and visited many dioceses to survey priests for a programme called Ministry to Priests. All the priests in the Armidale diocese participated and we were given a computerised personal report. My report gave me a very accurate assessment. Having already had a a lot of psychological assessment and knowing a lot of psychology I was better able to interpret a lot of the reports than some of the priests who were very disturbed about their personal results. The diocesan report concluded that many of the priests were confused and unhappy and felt very powerless to change their situation. For me, my report concluded I had problems but did not indicate how those problems could be overcome.

During 1987, having stopped doing a lot of Tribunal work, I turned to serious study as a hobby. I resumed my BA degree with part-time external study at the University of New England. Academic work gave me a lot of pleasure and was a great relief after a day's work at the large Tamworth Hospital. I was able to include a lot of my new knowledge in my preaching and the people said this was good. Sadly, my time in Tamworth soon came to an abrupt end.

I was forced to go on leave from the active ministry from 15 August 1987. 'Matters at Narrabri', as Bishop Kennedy called my situation, were resolved in my favour in February 1988. Father Gerard Hanna was very helpful. Father Frank Le Fevre was also very helpful. He had a positive influence on my life from then until his untimely death in a car accident in May 1998.

In February 1988 I moved to Armidale and lived at the Bishop's House, but I was not 'on the mission'. I was a full-time university student and I completed my BA degree. Living in Armidale was very satisfactory. Father Ross O'Brien and Father John Willis were very compassionate and caring. There were quite a lot of us in residence at the cathedral and we had some very enjoyable times. These were some of my happiest times in the priesthood. Father Barry Bell was back from studying psychology overseas. I particular enjoyed his company. He talked a lot about his own life's experience and I learned a lot about myself and my own problems.

Bishop Kennedy celebrated his priestly Golden Jubilee in November 1988. Cardinal Freeman came up for the celebrations. I enjoyed his company during the few days he was in Armidale.

The next year (1989) I enrolled in a Post Graduate Diploma at the university. I was anxious to return to ministry, but there was no opening in the Armidale diocese, so about the middle of 1989, I moved from Armidale to Sydney and did some supply work, which I enjoyed. The Bishop of Parramatta offered me a position in his diocese. From November 1989 to November 1990 I was the Assistant Priest at Kenthurst in the Parramatta diocese. The Parish Priest and I were not at all compatable. This was a terrible time for me. I was most unhappy.

There was a Mercy Convent down the road, where nuns went for renewal courses. I was invited to come there twice a week to celebrate Mass for the nuns. This was very satisfying and the nuns appreciated my contribution.

I continued my university studies. I enrolled in a two-year Master of Letters Programme in 1990 and I completed it at the end of 1991, with a thesis on the saga of the resignation of Armidale's first Catholic bishop, Timothy O'Mahony. Writing that thesis shed a lot of light on my own situation.

Meanwhile, knowing that I was unhappy at Kenthurst, the Bishop of Parramatta offered me a new position. From November 1990 to July 1992 I was the Assistant Priest at Merrylands (also in the Parramatta diocese). My first few months there some of the happiest in my life as a priest. Sadly, this didn't last. The Parish Priest, who had been away on sick leave, returned and the Administrator, whose company I had enjoyed so much, was moved. Life at the presbytery changed and I became very unhappy and unsettled.

By then I was just the shell of a priest. I was very unsettled and confused. I was depressed and I had no spiritual life. I gave very poor service to the people, most of whom I did not know. My ministry was a sham. As often as he could, I would leave the parish to spend time with a mate, who was equally distressed by his lot in life. It was all very sad.

Throughout my ministry I had gradually cut myself off from my peers and most other priests, and by 1992 I was doing it tough by doing it alone. My problems were of my own making and I have only myself to blame.

Bishop Kennedy's resignation had been accepted in May 1991 and he was succeeded as Bishop of Armidale by Monsignor Kevin Manning, who was ordained and installed at Armidale in July 1991. I concelebrated the ordination Mass. It was a memorable week. Bishop Heather from Parramatta served my Mass in the Bishop's House oratory then visited my parents at their home. Bishop George Pell, who was an auxiliary bishop in Melbourne, was in Armidale for a few days and I gave him a guided tour of Armidale. He came to our home and had dinner with my parents. They enjoyed his company. He later became Archbishop of Melbourne and was later translated to Sydney and became a cardinal.

I met with Bishop Manning in October 1991. He prohibited me from ministry in the Armidale diocese until he investigated my situation. He sent me for assessment by a psychologist. I understand he also compiled a report about me based on information he received from various priests in the diocese.

My active ministry ended in the middle of 1992. In June 1992 a priest told the Bishop of Parramatta that people in the Merrylands parish were aware of stories about me and felt uncomfortable, so the Bishop of Parramatta terminated my position from the beginning of July.

I took my annual holidays overseas in July as planned and extended my travels to undertake a lot of research in Ireland in August. When I returned to Australia, I moved back to Armidale where I completed my Graduate Diploma at the end of 1992. I successfully applied to commence a PhD in 1993.

Meanwhile Bishop Manning referred me to the Professional Standards Committee. This was an horendous experience, with absolutely no concern for my wellbeing. I was almost suicidal. No sin was ever so serious that a man should be treated as badly as I was treated and then left to go and stand on a railway platform. The Committee proposed a course of action. Initially Bishop Manning was ambiguous, but then adopted the Committee's proposal, without considering issues I had raised. I knew that if I did not stand up for myself then no one else would, so I held my

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ground. Bishop Manning and I reached a stalemate and we discontinued our interaction from early in 1993.

Meanwhile I had started a PhD on the history of Catholicism in northern New South Wales, but could not undertake the research in the Diocesan archives without Bishop Manning's goodwill, so I had to abandon that topic and find a new one. I changed my topic and undertook a study of the New state Movement in northern New South Wales. A lot of time had already passed and time was running out. All was not lost. I reduced the scope of my study from 1915 to 1930, rather than from 1915 to 1971. This allowed me to submit a thesis which I completed in July 1997, for a Master of Arts with Honours degree.

While studying at the university I had a lot of time to do a lot of thinking. Freed from many of the streses I had felt in the active ministry, I began a new way of living. I began praying and reading very helpful spiritual books. All this did me a lot of good. I grew in my awareness of the harm I had done and the things which had been a bad influence on my life, especially bad companions. With the benefit of hindsight I now realise I had been a very bad influence on them and they were a bad influence on me. I cut my ties with most of my old mates and made new friendships, which were proper, noble and uplifting.

Bishop Manning was transferred to Parramatta in July 1997 and the Armidale diocese was without a bishop for almost two years. On 17 March 1999 news came through that Dean Luc Matthys from Melbourne had been appointed Bishop of Armidale. He was ordained a bishop and installed at Armidale on 14 May 1999. I wasted no time in seeing how he would treat me. He treated me very kindly, with appropriate compassion, and has continued to do so.

Returning to active ministry was never a possibility for me, so after completing my thesis in 1997 I set about doing a few other things while looking for suitable work. In due course I secured a position at the university, in their Archives. I later became the manager of a Christian newspaper.

While working at the Archives I met the new Anglican bishop, Dr Peter Brain, who had been installed in Armidale in February 2000. He and I became very good friends. He has been a very positive influence on my life. One day, when listening to him preach I had a conversion experience, in which I realised that my life had been compartmentalised, and therefore that my Christianity did not pervade my whole being. Bishop Brain helped me explore these things. He never attempted to take me away from the Catholic Church but helped me to become a good Christian human being so that I could be a good Catholic instead of a confused and unsettled man. My whole life changed. I became a very devout Christian and deepened my Catholic faith.

As time passed I grew in my awareness of the problems which I had in my earlier life and began to address these. Bishop Matthys offered to send me for professional assessment so I accepted his offer. Having had previous experience of exploring my anxieties I was able to work productively with the professionals. They helped me to understand why my life had not turned out the way it should have. Having helped me to identify my problems the psychologists showed me how to address my problems.

These days I have some wonderful, adult friends. I enjoy proper intimacy. My friends value me and admire me. I now know what I should have been.

Meanwhile my father had a stroke in 1997 and had to be admitted to a nursing home, so I

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remained in Armidale to help my mother so she would not be alone. Dad died peacefully in REDA 2003, aged almost 85. Meanwhile, my mother's health was declining. I became her carer in 2003 and looked after her at home. By Easter 2004 she had declined so much she had to go into a nursing home. I ministered to her faithfully until she died in REDACTED 2004, aged 87. Although my poor relationship with my parents had contributed to my life's numerous problems, my parents had raised me to be loving and very dutiful, and were very pleased at how well I cared for them in their old age. Although my parents never gave me the emotional security I needed, they did their best, and I fondly remember their unconditional love, their generosity, and their deep commitment to their faith. I have no doubts that they are now sharing eternal life with the Risen Christ.

I am now freed from my obligations to my parents and I am now keen to move on. I have experienced God's mercy and would like to proclaim it and lead others to experience it. I would have liked to remain a priest in restricted ministry, but this does not seem to be possible. It is a simple reality that I had my chance and failed. It is not possible for me to be an active priest, so I am seeking to be released from my priestly obligations and to move on.

From about 1961 I have been very conscious that I am special to God and there is work God wants me to do. I failed to respond appropriately to God's call for me to be a priest. I caused great pain and scandal to God's people, and I deeply repent of my sins, which I have confessed and which I know have been forgiven. I put myself in God's hands and with His grace, I will serve Him faithfully in other ways which have yet to be revealed to me.